

characterizing nucleic acid-protein interaction; and claims 17-23 (Group II) drawn to a method of characterizing protein-protein interactions. Applicant respectfully traverses the restriction requirement imposed on the application by the Examiner.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserted that the two inventions are unrelated. The Examiner stated that based on MPEP § 806.04 and MPEP § 808.01, inventions are unrelated if it can be shown that they are not disclosed as capable of use together and they have different modes of operation, different functions, or different effects. The Examiner further asserted that in the instant case the different inventions “require different starting reagents, have different method steps ultimately resulting in different objectives.” Office Action, page 2, paragraph 2.

However, the MPEP § 803 additionally states that if:

If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the examiner **must** examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to independent or distinct inventions. (emphasis added).

It is respectfully submitted that the inventions claimed in Groups I and II are closely related and the search and examination of Groups I and II together would not be a serious burden for the Examiner. The claims of Group I are directed toward a method for characterizing nucleic acid-protein interactions. The claims of Group II are directed to a method of characterizing protein-protein interactions. Thus, both groups of claims are drawn to methods for detecting the interactions between biopolymers and have very similar steps. For example, each of the claims of Groups I and II require immobilization of a first biopolymer on a solid support. The solid support may be a gel pad in either method (compare claims 5 and 20). Each of the claims further require contacting the immobilized analyte with a second biopolymer. In both

groups of claims, at least one of the analytes must be a protein. Both sets of claims require measuring the strength of the interaction. Furthermore, because Group I and Group II both require that one of the biopolymers being examined be a protein, many aspects of each step overlap. For example, fluorescence can be used to detect the protein-nucleic acid interaction or the protein-protein interaction (compare claims 7 and 21). Thus, each method is closely related to the other.

Accordingly, a search of Group I claims will be nearly coextensive with Group II claims, and the applicant respectfully contends that the search and examination of the claims of Groups I and II should be possible without imposing a serious burden upon the Examiner. That each group has been identically classified (class 435) supports this contention. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the restriction requirement between Groups I and II.

Respectfully submitted,

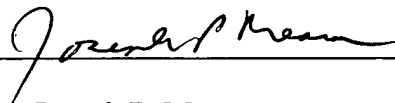
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